



Special Issue - July 2004

zoom **in on america**

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Celebrating Poetry

■ **Adam Zagajewski**

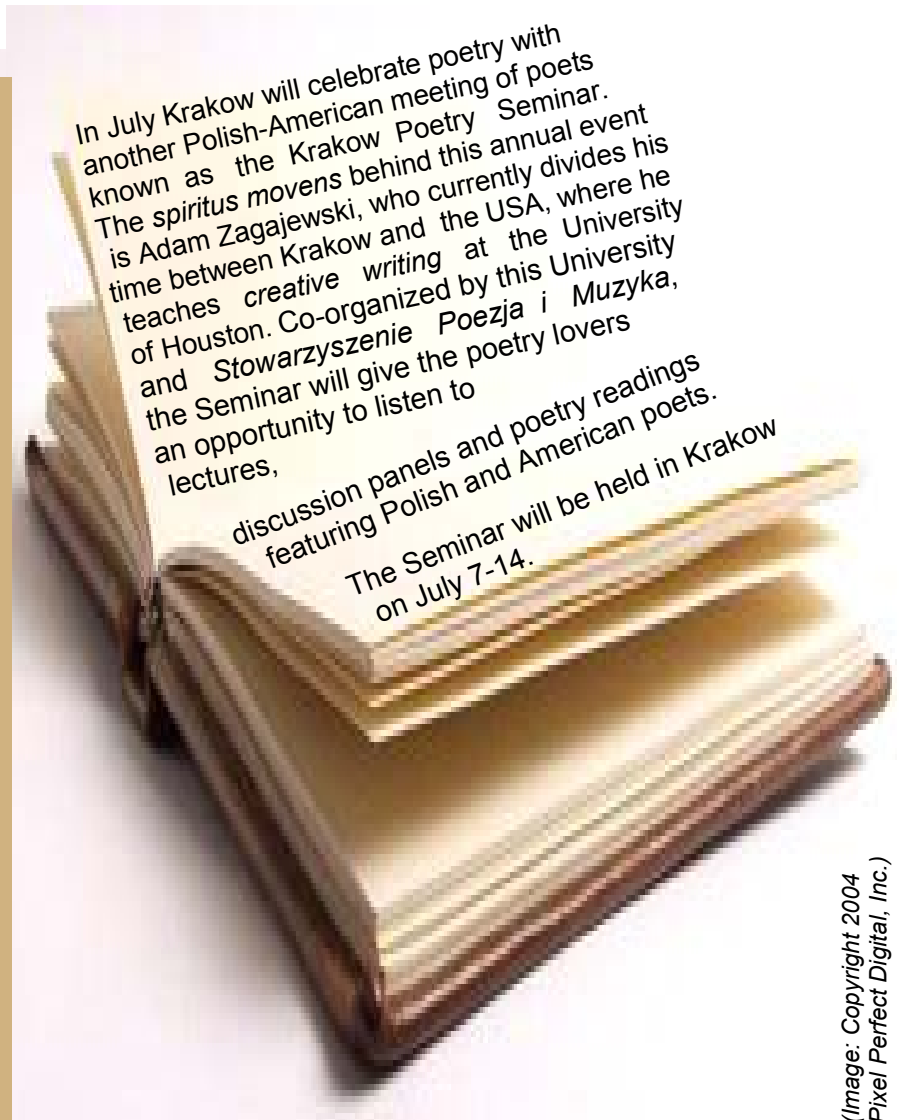
Adam Zagajewski **Poetry Searches for Radiance**

Poetry searches for radiance,
poetry is the kingly road
that leads us farthest.

We seek radiance in a gray hour,
at noon or in the chimneys of the dawn,
even on a bus, in November,
while an old priest nods beside us.
The waiter in a Chinese restaurant bursts into tears
and no one can think why.

Who knows, this may also be a quest,
like that moment at the seashore,
when a predatory ship appeared on the horizon
and stopped short, held still for a long while.
And also moments of deep joy
and countless moments of anxiety.
Let me see, I ask.
Let me persist, I say.
A cold rain falls at night.
In the streets and avenues of my city
quiet darkness is hard at work.
Poetry searches for radiance.

Translated from Polish by Clare Cavanagh



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■ **Poets**

Participating in the Krakow Poetry Seminar are:

Anne Carson
Clare Cavanagh
Carolyn Forché
Edward Hirsch

Tony Hoagland
Agnieszka Kuciak
Robert Pinsky
Tomasz Różycki

Janusz Szuber
Wisława Szymborska
Adam Zagajewski

■ **Poetry Reading**

Robert Pinsky will present his Favorite Poem Project (see next page) at a meeting open to the public at *Loch Camelot* (ul. św. Tomasza 17, Kraków) on Sunday, July 11 at 8 p.m. The meeting will be moderated by Adam Zagajewski.

■ Robert Pinsky

(...) In Czesław Miłosz's great poem „Song on Porcelain,” a poem of the immediate aftermath of World War II in Poland, millions murdered, every family in mourning and Warsaw in rubble, Miłosz writes:

*Of all things broken and lost,
The porcelain troubles me most.*

I remember this poem being hissed once at Berkeley. I think the person who made that noise would have preferred Miłosz to say that of all things broken and lost, the dead Jews troubled him most.

But that did not need saying, and that also would lack precisely the historical dimension of the broken porcelain, product of the old Europe that imagined itself civilized, that painted shepherdesses on teacups and that bit and slashed and tore itself apart. (...)

(...) In the first weeks after September 11, 2001, a kindly reader of my work suggested to me that some American poet should devise a name for the suicidal attacks that turned 767s into populated weapons, hurtling into the World Trade Center Towers and the Pentagon. But even that early, it was clear that those events already had been given their name. The name is the date, established by an appalled consensus, beyond writerly volition, as it is beyond official decree (...)

Both excerpts from Robert Pinsky's essay included in Writers on America (see below)



Photo: Robert Pinsky, Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, 1997-2000

Photo courtesy of N. Alicia Byers
Source: Library of Congress

Robert Pinsky, will be the guest at this year's Krakow Poetry Seminar. Pinsky was the 39th Poet Laureate of the United States. At that time he founded the **Favorite Poem Project**.

In the first year of the Project, 18,000 Americans of all ages and backgrounds declared what their favorite poems were. Some of these poems are now available on the Internet: <http://www.favoritepoem.org/poems/index.html>. On this website you may also listen to people read their favorite pieces of poetry: <http://www.favoritepoem.org/thevideos/index.html>

Who is the American Poet Laureate? Called in full *the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress*, he or she seeks to raise the national consciousness of Americans to a greater appreciation of the reading and writing of poetry. The Poet Laureate is appointed annually by the Librarian of Congress and serves from October to May.

Robert Pinsky served three terms as the Poet Laureate: 1997-2000

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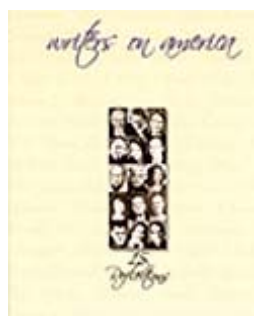
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■ Writers on America

During the Krakow Poetry Seminar, the United States Diplomatic Mission to Poland will promote a new publication: a Polish version of the booklet *Writers on America*.

The Polish edition has a special introduction by Czesław Miłosz.

The book contains reflections by 15 American poets, novelists, critics and historians on what it means to be an American writer. Among the contributors are Robert Pinsky as well as Robert Creeley and Julia Alvarez.



■ Click on Poetry

American Poetry

- + Great poets reading and talking about their work (Library of Congress)
<http://www.loc.gov/poetry/poetvision.html>
- + Online Poetry Classroom
<http://www.onlinepoetryclassroom.org/>
- + Poetry 180: A Poem a Day for American High Schools
<http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>

Polish Poetry

- + Poezja.org
<http://www.poezja.org/>
- + Poetica
<http://www.poetica.art.pl/>